



You have downloaded a document from
RE-BUŚ
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice

Title: Translations in culture

Author: Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech, Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz

Citation style: Adamowicz-Pośpiech Agnieszka, Mamet-Michalkiewicz Marta. (2016). Translations in culture. W: A. Adamowicz-Pośpiech, M. Mamet-Michalkiewicz (red.), "Translation in culture" (S. 7-12). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Bez utworów zależnych Polska - Licencja ta zezwala na rozpowszechnianie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych oraz pod warunkiem zachowania go w oryginalnej postaci (nie tworzenia utworów zależnych).



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

Translations in Culture

Since the cultural turn in translation studies, formulated by Susan Bassnett and André Lefèvere (Bassnett and Lefèvere 1990), we have witnessed a flourishing of interest in the area of translation perceived as cultural phenomenon, a mediator between the Same – the source language/culture and the Other – the target language/culture. This awareness of perceiving an act of translation in terms of cultural transposition brings new perspectives and dilemmas and situates literary translation in the spotlight of literary studies. The translation of a literary text in the light of cultural awareness in translation studies has become, as Trivedi writes, “a transaction not between two languages, or a somewhat mechanical sounding act of linguistic “substitution” [...], but rather a more complex negotiation between two cultures” (Trivedi 2005). In the light of the above, we can trace the specific areas in which changes induced by the growth of translation studies can be identified, to quote Lawrence Venuti:

Translation changes the form, meaning, and effect of the source text, even when the translator maintains a semantic correspondence that creates a reliable basis for summaries and commentaries. Translation changes the cultural situation where the source text originated through an investment of prestige or a creation of stereotypes. Translation changes the receiving cultural situation by bringing into existence something new and different, a text that is neither the source text nor an original composition in the translating language, and in the process it changes the values, beliefs, and representations that are housed in institutions. (Venuti 2013, 10)

Indeed, translation does change us and the world around us in an immense, though very often imperceptible way. Its influence is all-embracing and overarching. Yet, the changes it causes are an indispensable element for a group of people/nation's development and survival. It has been wrongly assumed that there is a solid indivisible cultural repertoire that constitutes the core of the group's identity (Even-Zohar 2010, 177). Paradoxically, as Itamar Even-Zohar argues, it is change that maintains the continuity of a group of people or nation:

The gist of the argument is that since it is the multiplicity of repertoires which co-exist as permanent competitors that makes it possible for a system to change; and since change is necessary because systems necessarily clash and conflict with other systems, heterogeneity allows systems to carry on. (Even-Zohar, 178)

Thus translation may be viewed as one of the forces that (re)shape the cultural repertoire of a collective entity and through the introduction of the new and foreign buttress its evolution and growth.

The once provocative and now obvious claim made by Susan Bassnett and André Lefèvre that there had been a shift of focus in translation studies from linguistically to culturally-oriented research is a fact. Harish Trivedi aptly observes that “it was precisely the formulation and recognition of this cultural turn in translation studies that served to extend and revitalize the discipline and to liberate it from [linguistics]” (Trivedi 2005, 12). Since the 1990s we have witnessed a growing interest in the fledgling discipline of translation studies: a series of monographs and encyclopaedias have been published, new journals and a new publishing house exclusively devoted to the new subject have been founded. In line with recent developments of the discipline, this volume also explores the theme of translation against cultural backdrop. It collects chapters which analyse different functions that translation performs in culture and its aim is to stimulate further discussion on the current stage and future perspectives of translation studies.

Our volume opens with a comprehensive examination of the genesis of the cultural turn in translation studies and translational turn in cultural studies by Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz. Tracing the development and evolution of cultural and translation studies Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz argues that due to methodological changes gradually translation has moved from the peripheral to the central position in transnational Modernist studies. On the basis of a broad survey of recent publications on Modernism she recognizes a translational turn in Modernist studies:

Modernist studies has undergone all the stages necessary to diagnose a “translational turn” in a given discipline: the expansion of the thematic field of research to encompass the history and poetics of literary transla-

tion, the increasing metaphorization of the notion of translation in the narratives on intercultural expansion, transmission and transformation of Modernist art and the methodological refinement in the course of which the category of translation acquired an epistemological value and transdisciplinary application. (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz in this volume)

Against this theoretical backdrop of cultural turn in translation studies a case study may be placed: Aniela Korzeniowska's exploration of the literary output of a Scottish writer Jackie Kay. This paper attempts to answer two questions: how to translate multivoicedness of Kay's poetry and why such a significant contemporary poet has hardly been known in Poland. To find the answers, Korzeniowska outlines the main themes of Kay's works, such as identity, racism, gender, sexuality, and cultural difference. She accentuates the fact that Kay is a culture-specific writer since she uses both standard and nonstandard forms of English and Scottish English (Glaswegian, among others), which definitely pose a challenge to translators, and adds that almost all her poems translated into Polish were written in standard English. Yet, one could surmise, "it is not so much the languages or the multiple voices Jackie Kay adopts in her writing that are truly problematic for the translator, but rather the frequent lack of detailed knowledge about why the given language or variety is being used in the given context." Korzeniowska concludes that Kay's "choice of voice is culture-specific in itself and this is what may – but does not have to – defeat many a translator" (Korzeniowska in this volume).

Similarly to Jackie Kay, Eva Hoffman writes in a plurality of voices in search of a new identity as a Polish immigrant in Canada and the USA, which is perceptively analysed by Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska. For Hoffman, "the idea of writing as an integral part of herself is a consequence of her ontological attitude towards a language. To articulate herself means for her to exist" and "writing is for her a part of understanding herself, being herself, and some kind of *translation therapy*" (Szczepan-Wojnarska in this volume). There are other similarities between Kay and Hoffman. Both feel different, ostracised by the society, they share the guilt of being a stranger. As regards Hoffman, "the guilt of being a stranger is obviously visible in many ways, for example in the language (very limited or in the lack of language); in behaviour which might be taken as rude or even vulgar (such

as a way of dancing); in the way of wearing clothes.” The impossibility of mediation between cultures is poignantly spelt out by Hoffman: “art of reality, keep going back and forth over the rifts, not to heal them but to see that I – one person, first-person singular – have been on both sides” (Hoffman 1998, 273). Both authors, Kay and Hoffman, base their writings on autobiography, yet as Korzeniowska and Szczepan-Wojnarska show in their articles, these women transform personal experience into universal reflection on the themes of identity and racism, of being culturally different from the majority and searching for acceptance.

The impossibility of mediation between cultures is also a subject of Paweł Marcinkiewicz’s article titled “The End of Translation as a Culturally Significant Activity: The Polish Poetry Collections of W. S. Merwin and Jorie Graham.” Yet Marcinkiewicz, analysing the Polish translations of Merwin and Graham’s poetry collections, indicates the impossibility of mediation between cultures in a different light. Marcinkiewicz accentuates the issue of insufficient interpreting the polysystem of the source text which in consequence renders translation as “an arena of controversy between – as Stanley Fish calls them – “interpretive communities,” whose cultural and poetic principles make literary text less meaningful” (Marcinkiewicz in this volume). In the polysystem of translation into Polish Marcinkiewicz also discusses translators and editors who insufficiently interpret the polysystem of Polish literature. Depicting a decreasing influence of cultural significance of translation in the polysystem of Polish literature and its contemporary peripheral position, Marcinkiewicz concludes his article with a statement that translation needs a generation change due to the fact that nowadays it functions differently than a decade ago.

Tomasz Markiewka, tracing the developments in the field of Bible translation, also indicates the necessity of change in translation. Yet, when Marcinkiewicz focuses more on a generation change of translators, Markiewka proposes a change of translation strategies in order to tackle the problem of cultural differences. The author of “Scripture’s In-*difference*. Inclusive Bible Translations and the Mechanisms of Cultural Manipulation,” analysing the so-called “inclusive translations” of the Bible, comes to a conclusion that the inclusive strategy of translation is an example of cultural manipulation which aims at silencing the masculine elements when assuring gender inclusivity.

Cultural manipulation is likewise the subject of the next chapter. In “Open Sesame! The Polish Translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*” Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz discusses the twentieth-century Polish translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Her comparative study of translations of the book reveals its shortcomings and also the peripheral position in the polysystem of Polish literature. Mamet-Michalkiewicz indicates that the popularity of Scheherazade’s stories, such as about Sinbad or Aladdin, does not project onto at least superficial knowledge of the book. Undiminished fascination with *The Arabian Nights* and exotic-fairytale-like Orient is the result of plethora of children’s adaptations of the book and Walt Disney’s popular productions. Michalkiewicz, analysing the Polish translations of the book, describes the process of ‘fairytalisation’ of *The Thousand and One Nights* in the Polish culture and signals a need of retranslation of the work.

From the fictional world of the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights* Agnieszka Pokojaska moves the reader of the present volume to the fictional world of Jasper Fforde. In “Proportions of the Familiar and the Strange in Jasper Fforde’s Fictional World, from the Perspective of the Reader of the Original and the Polish Translation” Pokojaska analyses the difficulties of translation and reception of the Thursday Next books. She shares a conviction that the above do not constitute a continuum but distinct categories. Analysing the proportions between the familiar and the strange in the original and the Polish translation, Pokojaska notes significant differences, concluding that the reception of Fforde’s novels in the Polish translation does not have the same effect as in the original.

The issue of reception of the original and the translation is also raised by Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech in the article “Revisiting G. B. Shaw’s *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Differences in Cultural Reception and Translation in England, the United States, and Poland.” She perceives the play as a means of propagating the then-revolutionary views on the role of women in society. *Mrs Warren’s Profession* was censored to stifle social debate in Britain and the US. Adamowicz-Pośpiech juxtaposes the downright condemnation of the play on the Isles with its reception and translation on the Continent which was much more favourable and popular. In Poland, though the drama was not censored, nonetheless its performance was abandoned due to political and ideological causes. The paper outlines the differences of the

play's reception and translation against the historical and cultural backdrop of the first decades of the twentieth century. Indirectly it is concerned with the debate over marriage and women's legal rights that swept through Europe at that time.

The final article consists in a linguistic rather than cultural analysis of psalter translations. In "Why Differ? – Divergent Lexical Choices in Two Middle English Prose Psalter Translations and Their *raison d'être*" Kinga Lis proposes to analyse the lexical divergences between supposedly uniform fourteenth-century Middle English Psalter renditions from Latin. Analysing apparent divergencies between the first fifty Psalms of the Early and the Late Wycliffite Psalters, Lis indicates intra- and extratextual variations signalling that these variations are translator-dependent.

The present volume offers a wide range of methods of analysis of literary translation, divergent views on the place of translation in culture and how translations impact the receiving culture. Yet, we hope that the essays as a whole, will enrich and stimulate the development of cultural translation studies with new ideas and compelling interpretations.

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech
Marta Mamet-Michalkiewicz

Bibliography

- Bassnett, S., and A. Lefèvere. 1990. *Translation, History and Culture*. London: Pinter Pub Ltd.
- Even-Zohar, I. 2010. *Papers in Culture Research*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.
- Hoffmann, E. 1998. *Lost in Translation*. London: Vintage.
- Trivedi, H. 2005. "Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation," *91st Meridian* 4: 11–20.
- Venuti, L. 2013. *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice*. London, New York: Routledge.